



## CONGRESSWOMAN GABRIELLE GIFFORDS

### Summary of H.R. 4064, to make certain improvements in the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program

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**First, this bill expands the transferability of benefits to dependents of servicemembers who retired after 9/11 but before August 1, 2009.** The transferability section was designed as a retention tool, but many brave Americans served honorably and retired before the Post 9/11 GI Bill went into effect this August. These veterans are already eligible for the benefits themselves but many are unlikely to use them because they either have a degree or have moved on to a career that doesn't afford the time to use these benefits. **There is no need for these benefits, which have been earned by our warriors since 9/11, to go unused because the complexities of the original bill took too long to implement.** This bill corrects that.

**Secondly, it allows servicemembers otherwise qualified for the Post 9/11 GI Bill but who were medically retired due to a service connected disability to transfer these benefits to family members. They have earned that right.**

**Third, this bill expands eligibility for the housing allowance to those pursuing distance learning.** Today's veterans are younger and more accustomed to working online. Today's colleges and universities are offering more online coursework than ever before. For many veterans, especially those who are disabled, have families, or live in rural, remote areas, distance learning is the only accessible opportunity to attend college. Currently, they do not receive a housing allowance when taking these courses, even if they are attending full time. **This bill allows distance learners to receive the housing allowance rate for their home of residence, placing these Veterans on the same footing as those who are able to attend traditional brick-and-mortar institutions.**

**Finally, this bill expands eligibility to combine previously earned Veterans education benefits with Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits.** Many brave Americans earned their Montgomery GI Bill benefits through their service in the 1991 Gulf War, Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia and dozens of other places around the world prior to 9/11. Whether these Veterans continued to serve or volunteered to return to Active Duty, many went on to become eligible for Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits through their additional commitment in Iraq or Afghanistan. Current law effectively punishes those Veterans who served on active duty before 9/11 by stripping away one benefit they rightly earned in favor of another, different benefit. This inequity is at odds with Congressional intent. We correct it in this bill by **allowing eligible servicemembers to combine the two benefits for a total of 48 months of benefits – current practice for the Guard and Reserve.**